

What we see is what we are - Linda Wisdom

The photographer Ernst Haas once quoted: 'There is only you and your camera. The limitations in your photography are in yourself, for what we see is what we are.' This is very true of Vivian Maier.

Vivian's technical skill is a thing to be admired – her crisp, clear shots and niftily constructed compositions give transparency to all manner of subjects – but it is the skill with which Vivian approaches her subjects that most resonates throughout her oeuvre. Each shot seems to have been watermarked with an unmistakable charm.

Vivian's images offer a unique view of a genius in action. Her natural intuition of the human condition is visually intricate, filled with empathy, wit, a touch of whimsy, life's quirks, environmental observations, and situational awareness. She was versatile in her styles, from portraits to juxtapositions, to decisive moments, storytelling and so much more. Self-portraits which she turned into an art form, - not your run-of-the-mill selfie - but a timeless classic selfie that you would want to frame and hang as art. Masterpieces in themselves.

Much like opening up a time capsule, viewing her work makes you feel like a time traveller. Immersed in each piece of work, a glimpse into the life and times of a bygone era. Maier was ahead of her time; her images are timeless. Her empathic eye made her street portraits striking. Her images portray a great deal of affection toward her subjects. She had the knack for capturing the essence of her subjects.

Vivian had a gift for entering the privacy of the people she photographed; her brilliance in reading human behaviour is undeniable. Like a movie trailer, her photographs leave us with more questions than answers. Cleverly timed.

Always in the right place at the right time, with an intuitive sense of timing, effortlessly capturing moments of both high drama and sublime banality. It is not easy to make the mundane and everyday look extraordinary, but Vivian did with an expert sense of composition.

I've always felt she communicated through her photos and not her words. The natural ability to find strong characters but also to pre-empt a situation. This gift cannot be taught, it is an instinct. Coupled with her sense of timing, clean compositions, and near-perfect exposures. Each of her frames so full and satisfying.

Linda Wisdom is a self-taught photographer and lens-based artist, specialising in fine art street, urban and lifestyle photography based in London.